DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 273 900 CG 019 364

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TITLE Relationship-Precipitated Homicides as Mediated by Ethnicity.
PUB DATE 85
NOTE 57p.; Doctor of Psychology Research Paper, Biola University, California.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Age Differences; Blacks; *Cultural Differences; *Death; *Ethnic Groups; *High Risk Persons; Hispanic Americans; *Interpersonal Relationship; Sex Differences; *Victims of Crime; Whites
IDENTIFIERS Bereavement; *Homicide

ABSTRACT

Homicide is the 12th leading cause in absolute number of deaths in the United States. Research has suggested that: (1) minorities have a greater homicide risk than do Anglo-Americans; (2) males are much more likely than females to be homicide victims; (3) the highest overall homicide rate occurs between the ages of 25 and 39; (4) among minorities, the lower the socioeconomic status, the higher the risk of homicide victimization; (5) most homicides occur within a circumscribed geographic area whose population is overcrowded, undereducated, and poor; (6) homicides occur more frequently in the home than in any other setting; (7) firearms, especially handguns, are the most frequently used means of committing homicides; and (8) most victims and offenders are acquainted and many are related. Research on bereavement suggests that homicide bereavement is more severe than bereavement for suicide, natural death, or accidental death. Future research into homicide should address the areas of ethnicity, sex, age, personality, timing of the purchase and loading of firearms in relation to the homicide, alcohol and drug use by offenders and victims, domestic violence, and friend and acquaintance homicide. The homicide research to date has demonstrated that, when studying risk, all victims cannot be grouped together. Ethnicity and the relationship between the offender and victim are two important distinctions that future research on homicide needs to make. A three-page reference list is provided. (NB)

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RELATIONSHIP-PRECIPITATED HOMICIDES AS MEDIATED BY ETHNICITY

CG 019364

Doctoral Research Paper
for the Degree of Doctor of Psychology

ROSEMEAD SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

BIOLA UNIVERSITY

ANDREW THOMAS BIXLER

1985

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RELATIONSHIP-PRECIPITATED HOMICIDES AS MEDIATED BY ETHNICITY

BY

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A doctoral research paper submitted to
Rosemead School of Psychology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Psychology

La Mirada, California

1985

RELATIONSHIP-PRECIPITATED HOMICIDES
AS MEDIATED BY ETHNICITY

BY

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Abstract

This review assesses the present state of knowledge regarding the differences between Anglo, Black, and Hispanic victims of criminal homicide where there was a relationship between offender and victim (relationship-precipitated homicide) and the impact of homicide on the survivor. Relationship- and non-relationship-precipitated homicides are differentiated by age, socioeconomics, and ethnicity. Other factors considered include geography, alcohol abuse, precipitating circumstances, offender-victim relationship, sex, and weapon. The above factors' impact on bereavement is also considered, and a comparison is made of typical grief reactions to homicides, accidents, suicides, and natural deaths. Recommendations are made for future research.

Relationship-Precipitated Homicides as Mediated by Ethnicity

Homicide is the 12th leading cause in absolute number of deaths in this nation, claiming more than 20,000 lives annually (Bureau of the Census, 1980). In years of potential life expectancy lost, homicide ranks 4th for all individuals between the ages of 1 and 65 years. For minorities it is the leading cause of loss of potential years of life in individuals of this same age range. The above figures indicate that minorities suffer a much greater risk of being a homicide victim than do Anglo-Americans. Not only is the risk greater but the characteristics of the homicide event vary significantly among distinct ethnic groups. These characteristics and ethnic differences need more study.

This paper will focus on victims of criminal homicides. An additional focus will be the variation of descriptive variables of homicide due to differences between Anglo, Black, and Hispanic ethnic groups. Studies have consistently found differences between these ethnic groups when they were a focus of study (Loya et al., in press-b). After presenting a review of relevant articles, an argument for a distinction between homicides occurring in the context of pre-existing relationships that deteriorated to the point of violence and homicides which were secondary to another act will be offered. These areas of research require distinct research orientations. Areas of future research

pertaining to relationship-precipitated homicides will then be suggested particularly for those that seem most amenable to preventive legal and social measures.

This paper will limit its focus to criminal homicides in the context of pre-existing relationships that had deteriorated to the point of violence. An additional focus will be the variation of descriptive variables of homicide due to differences between Anglo, Black, and Hispanic ethnic groups. Studies have consistently found differences between these ethnic groups when they were a focus of study (Loya et al., in press-b). After presenting a review of relevant articles, areas of future research will be suggested that seem most amenable to preventive legal and social measures.

The impact of homicide extends well beyond the event itself. For those who knew the victim it begins a long agonizing grief period about which we know too little. There has been virtually no research on homicide bereavement in general or ethnic differences in bereavement. Vargas (1982) is one exception whose research offers some information about these issues. Drawing heavily on the work of Vargas, this paper will make comparisons between bereavement due to homicide and bereavement due to other types of sudden death (accident, suicide, and natural), and between the different ethnic groups with a specific emphasis on Hispanic bereavement, which Vargas indicated was most severe.

Ethnicity

Every study that has taken ethnicity into account has found differences between the ethnic groups. Minorities have consistently experienced a much greater homicide risk. Loya et al. (in press-b) categorized every homicide that took place in the city of Los Angeles between 1970 to 1979 using police and coroner reports. Their research goal was to compare several variables that represented the main categories that were found useful in understanding homicide and to apply these categories to the different ethnic groups. They found that Blacks had homicide rates that were 5.6 times greater than Anglos and 2.4 times greater than Hispanics--who had homicide rates 2.3 times greater than Anglos. This finding was very similar to Pokorny (1956) and Smith, Mercy, and Rosenberg (1983). Munford, Kazer, Feldman, and Stivers (1976) reviewed basic demographic data of 591 criminal homicides in Atlanta in 1961 to 1962 and 1971 to 1972. They found that Blacks had a twofold increase in homicide over the ten year period considered. This increase accounted for 70% of the total change. Jason et al. (1983a) found in their national homicide study that Black males had a homicide rate 7.3 times higher than Anglo males. They excluded Hispanics from their comparisons. In a study of criminal homicides in Chicago during 1965, Voss and Hepburn (1968) lumped together all minority groups and found they had 10 times the homicide rate of Anglos and accounted for 80% of all homicides. Thus research has

consistently shown that minorities have a greater homicide risk than Anglos and that Blacks have the greatest risk, followed by Hispanics.

Characteristics of Homicides with Respect to Sex

Males are much more likely than females to be homicide victims. While guns were the most frequent weapon used to commit homicides in both sexes (followed by cutting instruments, then blunt objects), women were proportionally more likely to be the victim of a homicide involving a gun than men (Loya et al., in press-b). Forty percent of Anglo females and 20% of minority females were the victims of homicide by beating although the reader is again reminded that the sample for these two groups was small (Voss & Hepburn, 1968). Voss and Hepburn (1968) also reported that males are more likely to be killed by an acquaintance or stranger and, in 96% of the cases, females by a close friend or family member. Twenty percent of minority male victims and 45.2% of Anglo male victims were murdered by strangers. In Los Angeles, male homicide victims accounted for 77.7% of all homicides. While a man was four times more likely than a woman to be the victim of any homicide, a woman was relatively more likely to be the victim of mate and crime related homicides (Loya et al., in press-b). However, the overall pattern of the data indicates that males are at greater homicide risk than females.

Sex by Ethnicity

The sex distribution of homicide victims varies with ethnicity. Voss and Hepburn (1968) analyzed 394 cases of criminal homicide that took place in Chicago. Over half (56.6%) of the homicide victims were minority males, 21.3% were minority females, followed by Anglo male and female victims who accounted for 17.0% and 5.1% respectively. It is interesting to note that this study found minority females to be at greater risk than Anglo males. Loya et al. (in press-a) report that in Los Angeles, males comprise 69% of Anglo homicide victims, 81% of Black and 88% of Hispanic victims. Jason et al. (1983a) also reported a sex-by-ethnicity interaction. The likelihood of homicide victimization for male victims was 7.2 times greater for Blacks than Anglos, and for female victims the likelihood was 5.8 times greater for Blacks than Anglos. So relative to the females of their respective groups, minority males are at greater risk than Anglo males, with Hispanics at greatest risk.

Characteristics of Homicides with Respect to Age

Age is a critical variable for describing homicides because it helps to identify at-risk portions of the population. The highest overall homicide rates occur between the ages of 25 and 39 (Wolfgang, 1958), and mate homicides are most frequent between the ages of 35 and 44 (Loya et al., in press-a). Loya et al. (in press-b) found that persons between the ages of 15 and 44 accounted for 69%

of homicide victims. Voss and Hepburn reported that 57% of all homicide victims in their study were between the ages of 20 and 39. Within this age group the peak was in the 25- to 34-year-old range whose rate was 26.9 per 100,000. After the age of 34, the overall homicide rate decreased until the age of 65 when it increased slightly (Kunkle & Humphrey, 1982; Loya et al., in press-b). Loya et al. (in press-a) also found that homicide victims between the ages of 25 and 44 were most likely to be killed by a gun. While homicide victims are usually young adults, age varies according to victim-offender relationship, with the victims of mate-homicides tending to be older than the victims of homicides by acquaintances or strangers. While most homicide victims are young adults, especially in the context of acquaintance and stranger homicides, mate-homicide victims tend to be older.

Age by Ethnicity

Age varies by ethnicity with Hispanic homicide victims tending to be younger than either of the other groups, followed by Blacks, then Anglos. The median age of homicide victims was 25.3 years for Hispanics, 29.4 years for Blacks, and 40.3 years for Anglos. Although Loya et al. (in press-b) were the first to report that Hispanics have the lowest median age, previous studies had corroborated their comparison between Blacks and Anglos (Munford et al., 1976; Pokorny, 1956; Voss & Hepburn, 1968; Wolfgang, 1958). A contributing factor to the age of Hispanic victims lies in

the prevalence of acquaintance and stranger homicides, which tend to be younger victims. As will be discussed later, Hispanic homicide victimization also tends to occur between acquaintances and strangers which occurs more frequently among younger victims.

Race by Age by Sex

The race-by-age-by-sex group with the highest risk of homicide were Black males in the 25- to 34-age range, with a homicide rate of 143.0 per 100,000 (Loya et al., in press-b). In their Atlanta study, Munford et al. (1976) found an even higher per capita rate of 250 per 100,000 for Black males aged 20 to 39. This rate is equivalent to one person in every 400 per year in this category. Anglo male victims over 50 years of age comprised 33% of their ethnicity-by-sex group whereas only 16.3% of minority male victims were over the age of 50 (Humphrey, 1982). In summary, when age, sex, and ethnicity are considered together, the highest risk group is young male Blacks, whose per capita risk in one study is 250 per 100,000 as opposed to 26 for all individuals in this age range.

Socioeconomic Factors as a Predictor of Homicide

One of the major variables confounded with ethnic differences is socioeconomic differences. There has been recent debate about the role of culture versus socioeconomic factors in homicide. Gastil (1971) and Hackney (1969) did independent research on homicides in the South using the F.B.I.'s uniform crime reports in the 48 states between the

years 1959 and 1961. Gastil and Hackney developed a "Southernness Index" to compare violence in the South with other regions to determine if there was a southern subculture that supported violence. However, their criteria are general, imprecise, and not objective. Loftin and Hill (1974) contend that the primary dimension being measured is proximity to the former Confederate states. Loftin and Hill note further that Hackney's dummy variable (Confederate South) has a .68 correlation with the "Southernness Index." While Gastil and Hackney did not compare ethnic groups, their work is germane to this paper, in that it addressed the competing influence of culture versus socioeconomic status. Gastil and Hackney compared underdevelopment and standard demographic or economic variables with cultural distinctions as to their ability to predict homicides. Their research supported the hypothesis that the most powerful predictor was cultural influence. Based on their research they concluded that the effect of cultural influence was not accounted for by socioeconomic differences.

Loftin and Hill (1974) criticize Gastil (1971) and Hackney (1969) on several points. Their main criticism is that Gastil and Hackney had biased their data in favor of the cultural factor. They did this first by assuming a linear relationship between poverty and homicide. Loftin and Hill mentioned work that demonstrated the occurrence of homicide more frequently in the lower socioeconomic groups.

This occurred primarily below the $4,000 per year range, curtailing rapidly after a median income of $4,000 per year, yielding a nonlinear relationship between socioeconomic status and homicide rate (Bensing & Schroeder, 1960). Second, Loftin and Hill argued that Gastil and Hackney used statistical procedures that identified whatever was not part of their socioeconomic variables as a cultural variable. This is quite significant since their socioeconomic variables were not very sensitive.

Loftin and Hill then reanalyzed the data used by Gastil and Hackney. They found that more sensitive measures of poverty and education accounted for the greatest amount of the homicide differences. Their measures included 1) mortality rate, 2) percentage of persons older than 25 years with less than five years' education, 3) percentage of families with an income under $1,000 per year, 4) percentage of the population who were illiterate, 5) percentage of failures on the armed forces mental test, 6) percentage of children living with one parent. Loftin and Hill concluded that "a more definitive assessment of the role of cultural and situational variables on interpersonal violence will require specifying a theoretical model which would allow for a full range of cultural and situational variables" (Loftin & Hill, 1974, p. 724).

Smith and Parker (1980) and Munford et al. (1976) verified Loftin and Hill's work. Smith and Parker collected their data from F.B.I. uniform crime reports. In both

studies these researchers found the socioeconomic variables that Loftin and Hill developed were the main factors accounting for the variance in primary homicides. When non-primary homicides were considered, this factor became non-significant, as did all other factors with the exception of a measure they termed "percent urban." They hypothesized that this factor was significant because crime-related homicides occur more frequently in urban areas.

Because of the high correlation between cultural and socioeconomic factors, it can be difficult to distinguish between the two. However, among minority groups, the lower the socioeconomic status, the higher the risk of homicide victimization. Therefore it seems premature at this point to reject either cultural influence or socioeconomic status as relevant factors in homicide. Rather, it is likely that both have a significant part to play in the role of homicide. Unfortunately it has been difficult to assess the socioeconomic status of the homicide offender or victim since this information is not contained in the police and coroner reports used. As a result, studies on socioeconomic status have typically had to rely on general geographic areas rather than specific cases. If data were available for individual cases, more specific comparisons could be made. For example, socioeconomic status could be compared to the norm of that geographic area as well as to the homicide victims or offenders of other ethnic groups.

Geographic Characteristics of Homicide

Geographic characteristics are those factors that describe where the homicide events took place. This is of critical importance in both the understanding and prevention of homicide. If homicides cluster in particular neighborhoods then an assessment of the qualities of that neighborhood helps delineate what factors are conducive to violence leading to homicide.

Generally, the offender and the victim live close to each other. Bullock (1955) studied criminal homicides in the city of Houston between the years 1945-1949. He used police reports for 489 cases, discarding 23 cases because of incomplete data or those that involved multiple assailants or victims. He found that 70% of offenders and victims lived less than 2 miles apart, and 33% lived at the same address. Bullock (1955) concluded an assailant and victim involved in a homicide in the private domain, such as a home, tend to live in close proximity, while those involved in homicide in a public place tend to live farther apart. There is also research which implies that the majority of homicides take place within specific geographic areas. Munford et al. (1976) categorized homicides by census tract in Atlanta for 743 cases during 1961 to 1962 and 1971 to 1972. He found that 2% of the census tracts accounted for 22% of the homicides.

When the characteristics of high risk geographic areas were studied, several descriptive factors were identified

consistently across several studies. Bensing and Schroeder (1960) found homicides to be concentrated in areas with the lowest socioeconomic status, the most crowding, the least stable population, and the poorest health. Munford (1976) found that homicides were most likely to occur in census tracts whose residents were of low socioeconomic status. He measured low socioeconomic status by income, crowding, and education measures. The criterion for income was "below poverty level" although an exact amount was not given. The criterion for crowding was more than one person per room, and for education it was the percentage of residents over 25 who had not graduated from high school. In his Houston study Bullock (1955) also noted that homicides occurred in areas characterized by marked deterioration of housing, a relatively high concentration of minorities, and by low socioeconomic status. The high homicide areas had 36% of the city's dwelling units and contained 54% of housing built before 1919, 63% of which was in need of major repair. 67% of the residents gainfully employed in the high homicide districts were laborers or domestic servants. They represented 39% of the city's population older than 25 years, but 63% of those who had a fifth grade education or less. Thus most homicides occurred within a relatively circumscribed geographic area, characteristically described as overcrowded, undereducated, and poor.

Geography by Ethnicity

For Black homicides that occurred in a home in Atlanta, 40% occurred within 10 of 65 census tracts that had more than 400 Black residents, 7 of which were contiguous. This was the most concentrated group geographically. Homicides committed in public were much more scattered geographically. Bullock (1955) found that the high risk portions of Houston were largely ethnic in origin, comprising 63% and 35% of the city's total Black and Hispanic populations respectively. The Black population was more dense in these census tracts than in any other portion of the city. Thus geographic areas which represent the most dense ethnic concentrations are also those of highest risk for homicide victimization. It is also important to remember that these areas are also the poorest socioeconomically.

Characteristics of Homicide by Location

Homicides were committed more frequently in the home than in any other setting. Loya et al. (in press-b) reported that 48.4% of all homicides took place in a home. The second most likely site (23.1%) was on the streets, with the next category accounting for less than 6% of all homicides. Munford (1976) and Pokorny (1956) found that approximately 40% of all homicides were committed in a home. Voss and Hepburn (1968) investigated homicide locations and found that in every race-by-sex category the home was the most likely location.

Location by Sex

The percentage of female homicide victims slain in the home was 61.5%, although for males it was only 37.6% (Voss & Hepburn, 1968). Munford (1976) reported that 66% of homicides involving Black victims and 54% of homicides involving Anglos occurred in the home which is the location of greatest absolute risk. However, as will be mentioned later, areas such as bars are more dangerous even though they comprise a relatively small amount of all homicides. Female victims are at greatest risk in the home, while males are at relatively greater risk on the streets and in bars, although they too are still most likely to be homicide victims in the home.

Circumstances Associated with Homicide

Wolfgang (1958) found that 80% of the homicides resulted from a vaguely defined altercation, a domestic quarrel, jealousy, an argument over money, or robbery. Similarly, Voss and Hepburn (1968) noted that the nature of the disputes that led to most primary homicides included the following: insults, having been cursed, or a quarrel over liquor or money. Bullock's (1955) findings were similar, indicating that arguments, marital discord, or love triangles were most frequently cited as the cause of homicide. Verbal argument was the most frequent cause cited in Loya et al. (in press-b), comprising 32% of all cases. Perpetration of a crime was second, with 26%, followed by physical fights at 10.3%. Sex and gang related

circumstances were each cited as the circumstances in 4.9% of the cases.

This area of inquiry is only in its infant stages, partly because of the nature of previous data bases. Information about the specific nature of the altercations is not given in police or coroner reports, which are common sources of information. To get accurate data of this type is difficult. Third party observers seem to be the best source. However, it is not clear how many cases would be lost due to the lack of observers. The type of homicide typically not observed may have had different parameters. For example, it can be expected that bar homicides would have an abundance of third party observers, while mate homicides would not. These are issues that must be grappled with by future researchers, who also see the value of collecting more specific data through interviews.

Use of Weapons in Homicide

With the exception of a Philadelphia study (Wolfgang, 1958), investigators have found that firearms are the most frequently used means of committing homicide. Further, they found that handguns were the most popular firearm used. Wolfgang (1958) found that 39% percent of all murders were by stabbing whereas 33% were by shooting. His study was done ten or more years earlier than most others. Therefore, a probable explanation for the difference is a shift in homicide weaponry. Loya et al. (in press-b) found that 56.5% of homicide victims were killed with a gun, cutting

instruments were used in 23.3% of the homicides, bludgeoning was the method used in 10.6% of the cases, and strangulation/asphyxiation in 4.3% of the cases. Bullock (1955), Munford (1976), and Voss and Hepburn (1968) all found that firearms were the principal means of committing homicide. These studies implicated firearms in 50-70% of all homicides. Block (1976) in his Chicago study found that the entire percentage of homicide increases from 1965 to 1973 could be statistically accounted for by an increase in homicides where a gun was the weapon. Jason et al. (1983a) found a complex interaction between ethnicity, sex, and weapon. In absolute numbers males were the victims of gun homicides more frequently than females.

When firearms are used, handguns are the typical weapons. Loya et al. (in press-b) found that 80% of gun homicides were with handguns. Wolfgang found handguns were used in 85% of the cases where a gun was the weapon used. Voss and Hepburn found one sex-by-ethnicity category where this general trend was not true: Anglo females were beaten to death in 40% of the homicides and shot in 30%. However, there were only 20 Anglo females in his study, which increased the possibility of unreliable percentages. Firearms, and in particular handguns, are the most frequently used homicide weapons.

Alcohol Use by Homicide Victims

Some research supports the possibility that alcohol reduces aggressive inhibitions and increases the possibility

of violent behavior toward others (Allen, 1980). Alcohol may also increase the risk of violence leading to homicide because of the environment in which alcohol is often used (e.g., bars). A lack of adequate control groups raises some questions as to whether alcohol is causally related to homicide. Homicide victims have often been drinking alcohol just before their death. Wolfgang (1958), Voss and Hepburn (1968), Haberman and Baden (1974), Constantino, Kuller, Perper and Cypress (1977), and Shupe (1954) found that about 50% of victims either had detectable levels of alcohol in their blood or were reported to have been drinking alcohol.

The methods used to gather data about alcohol use vary. For example, Wolfgang (1958) used third party reports. The more recent studies have used the coroner's toxicological reports which show definite and precise amounts of alcohol present in the blood. These reports eliminate the possibility of misinformation, confirm the presence of alcohol, and indicate the level of intoxication.

The percentage of homicide victims whose blood alcohol concentrations are greater than 100mg% remain strikingly high. Haberman and Baden (1974) found that 42% of victims who underwent toxicological testing had alcohol-blood levels over 100mg%. This finding has also been fairly consistent, ranging from 32% (Centers for Disease Control, 1984) up to the 42% found by Haberman & Baden. Those who found the higher rates of alcohol content used large cities for their data base whereas those who found percentages in the lower

thirties used larger geographic areas, which also incorporated more rural areas and suburbs, where alcohol may be less available.

Alcohol Use by Ethnicity

Differences have been found in alcohol consumption by ethnicity in homicide victims. Wolfgang (1958) reported that 70% of Black male victims had reportedly been drinking alcohol prior to the homicide. Anglos were reported to have been drinking alcohol in 50% of their homicides. Voss and Hepburn (1968) also found a differential use of alcohol between ethnic groups based on police reports of intoxicants having been present at the scene of the crime: 54% of homicides involving minority male victims and 46% of Anglo male victims. Voss and Hepburn found that alcohol was present for 61% of minority female victims and 47% of Anglo female victims. They did not divide minorities into subgroups, so a more detailed analysis from this data is not possible. Loya et al. (in press-b) found that alcohol blood levels varied markedly by ethnicity of victim. There were detectable levels of alcohol in 57% of Hispanics, 47.4% of Blacks, and 34.5% in Anglos. When the 100mg% level was used as the minimal criterion, 38.2% of Hispanics, 31.8% of Blacks, and 20.5% of Anglos were intoxicated. This differential could be an artifact of socioeconomic levels or it could represent cultural distinctions or both. To address these questions, appropriate control groups are needed as well as specific socioeconomic data for each case.

Alcohol Use by Offender-Victim Interaction

Loya et al. (in press-b) studied the presence of alcohol by offender-victim interaction. He found that the highest percentage of alcohol present in the blood was in those victims whose homicides occurred as the result of a physical altercation or verbal conflict. When the homicide was the result of physical altercation, alcohol was present 67.9% of the time. When the precipitating circumstance was a verbal dispute, alcohol was present in 55% of the victims. As a point of contrast, gang-related homicide victims had alcohol present in 48% of the cases. Alcohol was present in approximately 33% of all other categories. This difference becomes even more pronounced when only blood-alcohol levels over 100mg% were considered. Alcohol was present in 52.5% of physical altercation victims and 38.1% in victims where verbal conflict was the precipitating circumstance. For all other categories alcohol was present in 20% of the cases. The correlation between alcohol and homicide has been amply demonstrated. When decreased inhibitions might contribute to homicide victimization, alcohol is more frequently present. Thus victims with the highest blood alcohol content are those of homicide precipitated by a physical altercation, followed by homicide precipitated by a verbal dispute.

Some constraints with this type of research have typically been an absence of the division of the types of homicides when considering alcohol use. It can be expected

that those who are victims of crime are not as likely to be drinking as are those who are getting into verbal or physical fights with acquaintances or relatives on the weekend. A control group would be extremely helpful, particularly in implicating alcohol as a factor contributing to homicide since comparison rates could then be made.

Characteristics of the Offender-Victim Interaction

Wolfgang (1958) found that victims and offenders usually knew one another. Of the total cases 28% were among relatively close friends and 25% were among family members and relatives. Wolfgang included acquaintances with paramours and strangers, which accounted for 36% of the total homicides. The relationships for the remaining cases were not determined. Daly and Wilson (1982) found in their Detroit study that only 27.2% of the homicides were between strangers, 47.8% were among unrelated acquaintances, and 25% were between relatives. Loya et al. (in press-b) found that 55.2% of homicide offender-victim pairs knew one another. The highest risk of homicide in his study was between friends and acquaintances. Jason et al. (1983a) found that 56% were acquaintances, 36% were intrafamilial, with only 8% between strangers. Overall 63% of homicide victims died from non-crime related events between the years 1976 and 1979 (Jason et al., 1983a). The difference between Jason et al.'s percentage of homicides between strangers (8%) and Loya et al.'s (25.3%) is possibly because of the different

trends of the whole country (Jason et al., 1983a) versus Los Angeles (Loya et al., in press-b).

Relationship Between the Offender and the Victim

Daly and Wilson (1982) hypothesized that consanguinal (blood relation) homicides would be a relatively infrequent phenomenon. While they do not explicitly present their rationale, they do refer to biological relatedness as an "inborn" deterrent, a sort of genetic survival adaptation to one's own "immediate species." Daly and Wilson studied police reports of the 690 homicides that took place in Detroit in 1972. This study included only closed cases in which the offender-victim relationship was known. Closed cases accounted for 508 or 74% of the total number of homicides that year. Of all homicides, 15.7% were between spouses whereas only 6.3% were between consanguinal relatives. They concluded that there was less propensity for homicide between blood relations even though there was at least equal opportunity based on the proximity of the offender and victim. Daly and Wilson do not establish how they concluded that there is at least equal opportunity based on proximity. A possible confounding factor in this study is whether or not the excluded 178 unsolved cases fell differentially into one of the categories. While research generally supports a prior offender-victim relationship, the nature of that relationship is the most varied factor discussed. The number of offender-victims who knew each other varies from 75% in Daly and Wilson's study (1982) to

55% in Loya's study (in press-b). This disparity may result from methods of data collection or from the inconsistency of the variable itself.

Type of Offender Stressors and Offender-Victim Relationship

Humphrey and Palmer (1980) found that the type of stress experienced by a homicide offender was related to the relationship between the offender and the victim. Humphrey and Palmer used the Psychiatric Epidemiological Research Interview (PERI), which they revised to include loss and non-loss types of stressful events. They did not study the records of homicide victims but instead studied 272 offenders incarcerated for murder in North Carolina from 1976 to 1977. The actual information was obtained from prison records rather than from interviews. They did not report on the percentage of offenders, if any, who were able to avoid imprisonment and whom one might expect to be categorically different from those imprisoned. Those who had experienced high stress due to loss were more likely to have murdered family members or close friends. The study found that those who experienced non-loss stress were more likely to murder strangers or victims of other ethnic groups. The likelihood of killing family members, as opposed to acquaintances or strangers, was greater for Anglos while the opposite was true of Blacks. Humphrey and Palmer indicated that they were pursuing further research on stress and homicide using a control group, which no

researcher of homicide has done to date. As a result, such research is limited in the comparisons it can make. A control group would help identify the characteristics that would differentiate between homicide victims or offenders and those who had not been involved in a homicide.

Humphrey and Palmer's study (1979) indicates the possible effect of the offender's relationship with the homicide victim on the type of stress. When stress is loss-related, the offender and victim are usually relatives and when stress is non-loss related, the offender and victim are more likely acquaintances or strangers.

It can be seen that the Hispanic who is also the survivor of a homicide may very well be at risk for complicated grief. Their social support is typically inadequate, they have several social variables stacked against them, and they have suddenly lost someone extremely important to them.

Classification of Homicides

While many of the first studies treated homicide as if it were a unidimensional phenomenon, more recent research have generated results suggesting that it is useful to differentiate homicide into at least two categories. Block (1976) distinguished between what he termed altercation and robbery homicides. In his study, Block used police records to code 6,075 homicides in Chicago from 1965 to 1973. Block found that there were "essentially two patterns of homicide: a pattern of altercation homicide based on domestic feuds or

arguments between friends, and a second pattern based on robbery" (p. 510). He found that 64% of all homicides could be classified as altercation homicides and 19% as robbery homicides and the rest as unclassified or miscellaneous. He also found basic demographic differences between robbery homicides and other homicides. The primary difference was that in robbery homicides, offenders were much younger than victims. The average age difference between offender and victim for robbery was 20 years whereas for non-robbery homicide the average age difference was never more than two years. He indicated that his data source limited the data in two ways because the earlier police records did not include information about police killings or drug-related homicides.

Parker and Smith (1979) developed a categorization of homicides based on preexisting divisions used by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (F.B.I.). They divided homicides into two groups based generally on implied motive. The first, labeled primary homicides, involved a family member or an acquaintance and was usually the result of an act of passion. These homicides include "1) spouse kills spouse, 2) parent kills child, 3) child kills parent, 4) relation kills relation, 5) other family, 6) lovers and triangles, 7) brawl due to alcohol, 8) arguments over money or property, and 9) other arguments" (p. 615). The second group was labeled non-primary homicides. These were more instrumental in nature and included the following types: "1) gangland

slayings, 2) institutional homicides (occurring in mental and correctional institutions), 3) felony homicide (committed in the course of another crime), and 4) suspected felony homicide" (p. 615-616). Both types were thought to involve at least some degree of premeditation or decision making.

Parker and Smith (1979) divided homicides into these categories because they believed that homicide was not a unidimensional phenomenon. They tested their hypothesis by measuring the rates of primary and non-primary homicides by state. They used a regression coefficient to determine whether legal deterrents or a structural poverty index accounted for a greater percentage of the variance. The structural poverty index they used was developed by Loftin and Hill (1974). They found that the structural poverty index was the most powerful predictor of both homicide types, and that it was particularly predictive of primary homicides. It accounted for 80% of the variance for primary homicides and only 38.2% of the variance for non-primary homicides. The critical issue is that the different results of the two groups, in this study and the study by Block (1976), indicate that homicide is not a unidimensional phenomenon.

Jason, Flock, and Tyler (1983) argued that Parker and Smith (1979) confused some important distinctions in the way they divided homicides. They thought the critical issue was whether the homicide was the primary act (primary homicides)

or whether it was secondary to a crime of some other sort (secondary homicides). They based this distinction on two assumptions: First, the motivation of an offender differed when his primary intent was to commit homicide, not another type of crime; second, the victim's involvement in and control of these two situations differ. Jason et al. (1983b) used the uniform crime report issued by the F.B.I. from 1976 to 1979. These reports, which the F.B.I. estimated contained over 96% of all homicide reports, were accompanied by supplementary data concerning the victim, offender, and the event. Racial distinctions were made between White and Black only. It is not clear if Hispanics were excluded or lumped together with Whites.

Jason et al. (1983b) found that the racial difference was greater for primary homicides. There was a 7 to 1 differential in which Blacks were more likely victims than Anglos for primary homicide. For secondary homicide the relative risk for Blacks was only four times higher than for Anglos. Again the critical issue is that the two categories seem to produce different results, supporting the importance of the distinction between different types of homicide.

Parker and Smith's (1979) division was based on the presence or absence of premeditation. Jason et al. based their distinction on the primacy of the homicide act with no particular reference to motive, although a shift of motive is implied.

Parker and Smith and Jason et al. used these distinctions in an effort to utilize F.B.I. data given in their uniform crime report. Jason et al. did not generate and test competing hypotheses to differentiate their distinctions from those of Parker and Smith. In both studies, the distinctions overlap and are restricted by their exclusive use of F.B.I. uniform crime reports. In spite of this, their distinctions have proved valuable and research consistently indicates that such distinctions about homicides are important.

The issue common to the various definitions of primary homicide seems to be whether or not it involves a relationship that has deteriorated to the point of homicide. Thus will be referred to in this paper one major type of homicide as relationship-precipitated homicide.

The concept of relationship-precipitated homicide is not clearly demarcated by either Jason et al. (1983b) or Parker and Smith (1979). For example, in premeditated homicides in which the victims were chosen randomly, as in some gang initiation rites, the victim may have played no part except living in a violent neighborhood. Jason et al. should include this as a primary homicide even though, using their own criteria, the case would more accurately be a crime-related homicide based on the role of the victim in his victimization.

The criteria used by Jason et al. did not ensure that there existed a prior relationship between the offender and

the victim. This is demonstrated by the fact in their research only 79% of primary homicides were between individuals who knew each other. Thus primary homicides as defined by Jason et al. are not necessarily relationship-precipitated homicides as defined in this paper.

By defining primary homicides as "crimes of passion," Parker and Smith exclude premeditated family homicides motivated by relationship conflict. Their definition would also include "crimes of passion" as primary homicides even when there was no prior relationship. One such example would be a "love triangle" where a jealous person murders his or her ex-lover's new friend without a pre-existing relationship.

In addition to research that has specifically dealt with distinctions between primary and secondary homicides, research reviewed prior to this section also support this differentiation even though that was not necessarily the intent of their studies. In general, those studies found that the correlates of homicide depend on the subgrouping, showing that homicide is not homogeneous.

For example, females are more at risk of being the victim of homicides where the offender-victim relationship is that of intimate partner or mate, whereas for males the most likely offender-victim relationship is that of acquaintance or stranger. This suggests the possibility that even more refined distinctions would be beneficial as

well since there seem to be important differences in homicides between intimate acquaintances and between acquaintances in general. This hypothesis is also supported by research investigating modal ages of homicides. Mate homicides are most prevalent in older individuals (25-34 year old range, Loya et al., in press-b), whereas stranger and acquaintance homicides occur mainly in the younger age brackets. Thus there are important homicide distinctions between intimate acquaintances versus acquaintances as well as between these versus stranger homicides. In this respect it is interesting to note that Hispanics have the youngest mean age and that they have the greatest number of stranger homicides. This suggests the possibility that stranger homicides occur at a younger age than acquaintance homicides.

Young Black males, which constitute the highest per capita homicide rate of all the age-by-sex-by-ethnicity categories, experience their greatest threat from acquaintances, suggesting again that the type of threat and the circumstances surrounding the threat varies by subgroups. Geographically those homicides that are relationship-precipitated are more confined geographically than crime-related homicides or secondary homicides. Males are more prone to be the victim of homicide outside the home than females, who in turn are more likely to be murdered in the home by someone who is very well acquainted with them.

Thus males appear to be victims of different types of homicide than are females.

One of the strongest indicators that there exists a difference between relationship-precipitated versus secondary homicides comes from the research by Loya et al. (in press-b), in which they found that alcohol use was significantly different among the various offender-victim relationships. Those who had been slain during a physical fight had intoxicating levels of alcohol present in the blood in 52.5% of the cases. Only 19.8% of crime-related homicides have similar blood alcohol levels. This was the only study that investigated alcohol levels in the blood by classification of homicide and the difference between the percentages are striking. Humphrey and Palmer's research (1979) also bears directly on this issue. They found that the type of homicide was related to the type of stress that the offender was experiencing. Essentially offenders who experienced non-loss stress were more likely to murder a stranger whereas those who had experienced loss-related stress were more likely to murder someone who was a relative, friend, or acquaintance.

Since the practice of differentiating homicide types is relatively new (Jason et al., 1983; Parker & Smith, 1979), most studies have not analyzed their data by type of homicide. The distinctive demographics of the different homicide types are substantial enough to warrant further research. Conversely research that does not take this

distinction into account oversimplifies homicide by lumping together disparate groups. The preliminary results suggest that further refinements in homicide distinctions will prove useful in the understanding of this phenomenon.

Homicide, a Public Health Concern

The multidimensional nature of homicide is important for public health, mental health, and law enforcement officials, all of which deal with homicide-related issues. Some public health issues include how overcrowding, poverty and poor education contribute to violence and homicide. Another important issue is the dysfunctional patterns in social relationships that contribute to homicides. Research on these issues is scarce or nonexistent. As these factors are clarified, programs to reduce homicides can be better informed and better focused. This will require the combined efforts of researchers and practitioners in the fields of mental health, public health, and law enforcement.

In addition to the homicide event, professional health workers need to address the bereavement related to homicide. Research in this area is very limited and yet very necessary. Homicide bereavement is likely to be problematic for several reasons: 1) homicide is usually a sudden death, 2) the victim is usually a young individual, 3) the bereaved is often a parent or young spouse, and 4) the act is a violent act. The final memory is not only difficult to resolve but is extremely intrusive in the life of the

bereaved person, whose sense of safety and security is shattered.

Homicide Bereavement

Vargas (1982) studied bereavement and the mode of death by ethnicity in the cities of Los Angeles and Albuquerque. He measured grief reactions in three ethnic groups (Hispanic, Black, and Anglo), following four modes of death (homicides, suicides, accidents, and sudden natural deaths). He found homicide bereavement to be significantly more severe than bereavement for suicide or natural death on most dimensions. Homicide bereavement also tended to be more severe than accidental death, although not always significantly so. A possible confounding factor in this study was the lack of a control for type of relationship. Thus suicide bereavement may have been lower in intensity because the bereaved individual may have been less likely to be a parent. Sanders (1982) has shown that parents and spouses have the most difficult bereavement after a homicide.

Homicide death survivors showed the most despair, the most obsessive-compulsiveness, the most physical symptoms, and the most loss of vigor. Except for the survivors of accidental deaths, they experienced more severe symptoms of depression, somatization, anger and hostility, and sleep disturbance. Homicide and accident survivors had the least object-specific anger. It can be hypothesized that this type of anger is the most difficult to resolve and so

contributes to prolonged grief. Homicide and accident survivors reported the least social support, which is the most critical dimension for the adequate handling of bereavement (Maddison, 1973; Maddison & Walker, 1967; Raphael, 1977).

There are other factors that make homicide bereavement difficult. Homicide survivors typically had the worst financial situations, the worst housing, and the lowest education. It is difficult to determine whether the increased severity of bereavement is due to the homicide itself or to the lower socioeconomic conditions associated with it. It is also irrelevant in a practical sense, since homicides are usually linked with these other factors.

Vargas also compared ethnic groups across all modes of violent death. Compared to Blacks and Anglos, Hispanics experienced the most despair, the most guilt, the most social isolation, the most rumination about the death, the most suicidal ideation, the most atypical grief responses, the most death anxiety, the most sleep disturbance, and the most loss of meaning. The differences were significant for each of the first five symptoms of grief, whereas on the other symptoms one comparison was significant and the comparison with the other ethnic group only tended toward significance.

Vargas also measured relevant pre-death symptomatology by retrospective self-report on the same scales as the post-death assessment. He found that Hispanics reported the

most severe symptoms during this time period as well. It is important to note that all the deaths in this study were unexpected so that the pre-death symptomatology was not merely anticipatory grief. Vargas concluded that the "Hispanic group is experiencing significantly greater psychological symptomatology prior to the death and has fewer avenues of social support. . . . Perhaps this increased stress is the result of acculturational or culture conflict since many of the respondents were immigrants." It is noteworthy that Hispanics report less social support than Anglos or Blacks, since this is considered to be the single most critical variable in the successful outcome of bereavement (Maddison, 1973; Maddison & Walker, 1967; Raphael, 1977).

As mentioned previously, the suddenness of homicide is a relevant factor in the strength of the grief reaction. Sanders (1982) found that sudden death produced a more intense grief reaction than terminal illnesses of six months duration or less. She also found that parents and spouses have a more intense bereavement than children (Sanders, 1980). Both of these situations are very common in homicide situations. Because young males are the most likely victims, the bereaved are often mothers or wives. If the homicide was a mate homicide, then the whole parental unit is broken up since the assailant is either jailed or evading the law. This often leaves dependent children to be cared for by grieving grandparents. The care of dependent

children has been identified as an added stressor to bereavement (Vachon, Rogers, Lyall, Lance, Sheldon, & Freeman, 1982). If the assailant is a family member, as is more frequently true of Hispanics (Loya et al., in press-a), then the bereaved again have a double loss. Multiple stressors in turn have been identified as a predictor of pathological stress (Raphael, 1977).

It can be seen that the Hispanic who is also the survivor of a homicide may very well be at risk for complicated grief. Their social support is typically inadequate, they have several social variables stacked against them, and they have suddenly lost someone extremely important to them.

Future Research

Homicide is a violent act that is the result of social, psychological, cultural, and biological factors. This section will review the at-risk groups and the hypotheses that are currently offered as explanations for their increased risk. Research issues designed to further clarify our understanding of the phenomenon so that effective preventative measures can be developed will also be discussed. Two general research techniques to collect the necessary proposed data are: 1) the use of matched control groups and 2) a method of gathering data by interview in addition to police and coroner reports.

Ethnicity

Research has made a strong case for investigating homicide factors by distinct ethnic groups. Blacks have consistently been found to be at higher risk than Hispanics, who are at greater risk than Anglos. There are, for example, at least three studies that find Hispanics at 2.3 times greater risk of homicide victimization than Anglos (Loya et al., in press-b, Pokorny, 1956; Smith & Parker, 1980). There are systematic differences between the typical Black and Hispanic homicide victim. For the Black male, homicide is typically associated with a verbal argument, perpetrated by friends or acquaintances, and carried out in the home with a handgun. For the Black female, the scenario is similar with the exception that the assailant is most typically the husband.

For Hispanics, the weapon most frequently used is a handgun or cutting instrument. Verbal arguments, physical fights, criminal activity, or gang violence are the most frequent situations precipitating a lethal act of violence. Acts committed by strangers are more frequent and the fact that the Hispanic homicide occurs more frequently in the street than in the home is another difference (Loya et al., in press-b).

Three common factors, group status, poverty, and subcultural violence, have been suggested to account for the increased risk among minorities and the differences between minorities. Minority group status may heighten the risk

because of the influence of factors that result in prolonged exposure to prejudice and institutional discrimination. It is possible that this social devaluation is internalized and results in reduced self-worth as well as rage over their mistreatment. They may thus be more prone to act aggressively because of their frustrations and because of their conditioned belief that their and others' lives are worth less.

Loya et al. (in press-b) points out that poverty may increase risk of homicide victimization by depriving individuals of legitimate means and resources of meeting culturally valued goals. Both of these factors are examples of frustrated goals and result in decreased status of the minority individual as a valuable contributing human being in society.

The third variable, the existence of a violent subculture, may be transmitted across generations where violence against a fellow human being is more acceptable in that subculture. Another aspect may also be that the subculture may engage in behaviors which in turn increase the likelihood that a violent act will be committed. For example, alcohol use, which is prevalent among the general Hispanic population (Wolfgang, 1958) may also lead to decreased inhibitions and increased potential for violent interchanges.

These issues are intertwined and difficult to deal with independently. All the explanations have received some

support. However, no single study has simultaneously studied poverty and cultural variables with a control group so that comparisons could be made. Research of this type would allow questions such as how the victim's poverty level compare to that of his or her community. How does the victim's poverty level compare to victims of other ethnic groups? How is the risk of homicide increased by cultural influences, overcrowding, and low educational and economic levels? Such information could also address to what degree poverty differentially affects each culture by including in the comparison group both poverty and non-poverty members of each ethnic group. In this way the effect of poverty within each ethnic group could be measured. Additionally, comparisons could be made between the ethnic groups. One possible finding could be that a greater similarity exists between middle classes across ethnic groups rather than between members of each ethnic group. In this case a possible explanation would be that the isolation from society and stress created by being "less desirable" socially may bring out increased hostility and allegiance to their respective ethnic backgrounds. These individuals would experience increased alienation and hostility as well because of their failure to integrate into the larger society.

Sex of the Victim

Research has shown that risk of homicide varies by the sex of the victim, with males being at a higher risk.

Explanations for the increased violence experienced by males focuses primarily on cultural and biological factors (Loya et al., in press- b). This phenomenon may be a subcultural variation encouraging more physical prowess and an emphasis on the male being the dominant sex. A finding that Loya et al. (in press-b) made was that there was a tremendous difference between the ratio of male to female homicide victimization by ethnicity. Hispanics had the highest male to female ratio (7.3), followed by Blacks (4.3) and Anglos (2.3). Perhaps, for example, Hispanics emphasize the macho male role and regard it their duty to take care of the females, who are considered the weaker sex so that acting aggressively toward them would not be tolerable. Other cultures may view the females as more of an equal so the males may be more likely to act violently toward them as they do other males. Conversely, more hierarchical ethnic groups may view females more as objects to be manipulated and as property.

Biological factors are also considered as contributing factors. Hormonal differences, such as testosterone, may account for differences in activity and therefore the likelihood that anger will be expressed physically.

An individual's biological sex may be secondary to his or her sex role adjustment. It would be useful to gather sex role behavior patterns on homicide victims (and offenders) that would allow a comparison of female victims to each other and to male victims. Through such comparisons

the relationship between sex role orientation and type of homicide could be investigated. One might hypothesize, for example, that an extremely "macho" man would be more likely than an androgenous male to be a victim of homicide in a bar or as the result of a physical altercation. Similar comparisons could be made for females as well. Additionally, an appropriate referent group might aid the identification of high risk factors associated with homicide victimization. Is there a relationship between women's and men's use of verbal as opposed to physical expression of emotion? Also is there a relationship between sex role and the type of homicide of which they are a victim? More needs to be known about the sex-by-ethnicity interaction. Are Hispanic men protective of the women or are women in the Hispanic subculture constrained to be less confrontive and therefore avoid anger-producing situations that may lead to homicide? Conversely Hispanic women may express their anger more immediately, thus reducing the probability of major emotional conflicts.

Age

In terms of homicide victimization it is riskier to be young (15 - 44) than old. The increased risk of youth is explained by social and psychological factors associated with aging. Socially youths are typically in an inferior position both economically and in terms of job satisfaction. This may in turn contribute to a life style that is riskier and more frustrating and thus prone to increased aggressive

acts. The other aspect is that youths are more active physically and thus more likely to express their emotions in physical ways. Older adults become increasingly less active and are therefore less likely to become involved in physical acts in general or violent acts in specific. Loya et al. (in press-b) conducted the first study that indicated that Hispanic homicide victims had the lowest average age, although studies have consistently shown that Blacks tend to be younger than Anglos.

Personality

Although personality may be a useful indicator of high homicide risk, it is a topic about which we know very little. It was not addressed in the literature review because there is no existing research on the topic. An interview methodology to obtain a personality and psychiatric assessment and an appropriate referent group are necessary to deal with this topic. The data would offer information which could deal with questions about which we must now speculate. For example, are narcissistic or paranoid people, who are very sensitive to criticism, more likely to engage in verbal or physical altercations which are common causes of relationship-precipitated homicides? An individual's ability to understand and act upon the consequences of his or her actions (foresight as opposed to impulsivity) may reduce the risk of being a homicide victim. Another question that needs to be raised is the presence of a history of psychiatric instability. Finally, what are the

differences on these dimensions between ethnic groups? Issues such as these need further clarification for a full and useful understanding of homicide.

Firearms

While studies have demonstrated that firearms in general and handguns in particular are frequently used in homicides, no research has explored the timing of the purchase and loading of the firearm in relation to the homicide. An interview approach would offer increased information about these issues. Questions that could be specifically addressed include the following: Did the assailant own the gun, and if so did he shoot it and handle it often or was it purchased for "self defense" purposes and left relatively untouched. In addition, if the firearm had been owned for some time, it would be informative to know how accessible the weapon was before the homicide. Was it locked away securely, was it already loaded, or was it available to any family member? What would be the likelihood of an alternative weapon being used if there had been no gun readily available? Future studies must focus more directly on these issues so that the way in which firearms come to be used in homicides as well as the way they are treated prior to the homicide is understood.

Alcohol and Drug Use

The percentage of alcohol present in the victim varied dramatically in the Loya et al. (in press-b) study by the type of activity that resulted in homicide. In

crime-related circumstances the percentage of alcohol present in the victim was 19.8%. In physical fights the percentage of alcohol was 52.5%. This finding is compatible with the hypothesis that alcohol promotes aggressive behavior and aversive interactions. If one assumes that the probability of a crime-related homicide is less likely to be the result of an aggressive action by the victim, then one can assume that the victim's role is incidental and consequently the victim would play a different role in his or her victimization, perhaps his or her apparent vulnerability.

Alcohol use was most common among young male victims, however, the most striking evidence was for use among Hispanic victims. The use of alcohol was known to be generally high among Hispanics (Wolfgang, 1958). As mentioned previously, this finding supports the hypothesis that certain cultures encourage behaviors which are likely to contribute to aggressive behaviors.

Our knowledge of alcohol-related homicide is sufficient to indicate that a more thorough understanding of the phenomenon would increase our understanding of homicide. The use of alcohol has been implicated in approximately 50% of homicide victims. With an appropriate interview format the victim's drinking habits and the circumstances that prompted the drinking (for example, when depressed, angry, or in a social context) can be addressed. A control group could greatly advance our understanding of alcohol-related

homicides and is critical in determining alcohol's causal role. Control groups could also address such questions as, whether homicide victims are different or typical in their consumption of alcohol in comparison to their respective ethnic groups as well as across ethnic groups and socioeconomic groups.

Loya et al. (in press-b) discovered a difference between the presence of alcohol in homicide victims of different ethnic groups, and that Hispanics use alcohol most heavily. In comparison to homicide victims in other ethnic groups, do Hispanics get intoxicated more often or are they more prone to be victims of violence when intoxicated? Answers to these and similar questions would increase our knowledge of the role of alcohol's primary or ancillary contribution to homicide victimization.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is an important topic, particularly among black females who are most likely to be killed in the home by an intimate acquaintance (Loya et al., in press-b; Voss & Hepburn, 1968). The definition of domestic abuse or violence must be refined and measurement instruments and data collection strategies must be improved. The history of family abuse must be better understood as well as the relationship to homicide victimization. What is the relationship between past abuse, the nature of that abuse and subsequent homicide victimization?

There is no information about the victim's history of prior assaults or having experienced physical abuse as a child, again because prior research has not investigated this type of information due to the difficulty of obtaining it. These previous violent experiences may predict the individual's subsequent victimization. Perhaps victims of past physical abuse are more likely to be future victims of relationship-precipitated homicides. There may be a greater likelihood of violence of some sort in the past in situations where the victim precipitated his or her death through aggressive acts such as attacking a friend, who killed in self defense. Violence among friends and acquaintances is the most prevalent cause of death by homicide (Daly & Wilson, 1982; Loya et al., in press-b; Wolfgang, 1958). This category, combined with other homicides where there was a prior relationship, constitutes more than half of all homicides (Daly & Wilson, 1982; Jason et al., 1983a; Loya et al., in press-b; Wolfgang, 1958). To distinguish between long- or short-term friendships, categories are needed with greater sensitivity to the degree of relatedness and intimacy. How well did the victim "like" the offender, and how much time had they recently spent together? Had they recently spent more time together than usual so that emotions were more volatile? What was the exact nature of the final, fatal conflict, and how did it differ from other non-fatal conflicts? Another critical

variable in this context is the difference between homicide victims' and others' method of conflict resolution.

Friend and Acquaintance Homicides

One area that is relatively undeveloped is the description of the circumstances that precipitate or are associated with homicide. These are critical in understanding what contributes to the eventual homicide. The finding that homicide victims are typically acquainted with one another has held true from the 1948 study by Wolfgang to the Loya study which ended its data collection in 1979.

According to the Loya study, homicides among friends and acquaintances accounted for 33.7% of all homicides occurring in Los Angeles. This was the single largest proportion of any relationship category. However, it is particularly underresearched at this point. This is a particularly difficult area to research because of the reluctance to report conflict among acquaintances. The nature of the conflict as well as the frequency of prior conflicts and the relationship between these individuals and other acquaintances who never committed homicide are critical to our further understanding of this phenomenon.

Conclusion

Homicide is far too common an occurrence in our society. We particularly need studies of high risk groups. Several relevant research issues have been outlined by this paper. When studying risk however, all victims cannot be

lumped together, assuming that they are homogeneous. Ethnicity and the relationship between the offender and victim are two distinctions that are important. Thus future research on homicide needs to make these distinctions.

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